



U.S. Department
of Transportation
National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration

Administrator

400 Seventh Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

DEC 29 2004

The Honorable Joe Barton
Member, U.S. House of Representatives
6001 West I-20, Suite 200
Arlington, TX 76017-2805

NVS-216 mec
Ref. # 10094842

Dear Congressman Barton:

Thank you for your facsimile dated September 23, 2004, on behalf of your constituent, [REDACTED] wrote concerning the problems she and her husband encountered with their model year (MY) 1999 Thor Chateau travel trailer. We regret any inconvenience our delay may have caused you or your constituent.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is the Federal agency responsible for improving safety on our Nation's highways. We are authorized to order manufacturers to recall and repair vehicles or items of motor vehicle equipment when our investigations indicate that they contain serious safety defects in their design, construction, or performance. In order for the agency to initiate an investigation, we look carefully at the body of consumer complaints and other available data to determine whether a defect may exist. We seldom act on isolated problems or resolve disputes between individual owners, dealers, or manufacturers.

We appreciate the report you provided on behalf of [REDACTED]. Reports from motorists are a very important source of information for us. Each report is analyzed and entered into a database to help us determine whether an investigation into a possible safety defect is warranted.

A review of our database relative to problems associated with the propane sensor and brake control systems in MY 1999 Thor Industries, Inc., products revealed no other report of problems similar to that which [REDACTED] encountered; therefore, there is insufficient evidence to warrant opening a safety defect investigation at this time. The information you provided on behalf of [REDACTED] has been entered into our database. It will be considered with future reports to identify any safety defect trends that may require our attention.

With respect to [REDACTED] concern that her trailer is overloaded, we recommend that she load it as if she were about to take a trip, and then weigh it together with the tow vehicle at the nearest available truck scale. She should then compare these weights to the ratings published for her trailer and tow vehicle.

The trailer contains a weight information label in a format developed by the Recreational Vehicle Industry Association that lists its Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR), Unloaded Vehicle Weight (UVW), and Cargo Carrying Capacity (CCC) (which is the difference between GVWR and UVW). It should be noted that UVW is measured at the factory and that the weight of any dealer-installed options should be counted against the CCC rating.

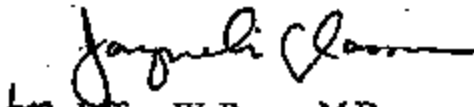
GVWR is the absolute maximum weight allowable for the trailer and all of its contents. As [REDACTED] noted in her letter, the sum of the published tire carrying capacities (1,820 lb each) at their recommended pressures (50 psi) and the rated tongue weight (10% of GVWR) must equal or exceed the trailer's GVWR. While a higher load range ST205/75R15 tire exists (Load Range D, capable of carrying 2,150 lb at 65 psi), the original Load Range C tires should be capable of supporting the trailer if it is loaded within its GVWR.

We also recommend that [REDACTED] consult her tow vehicle's owner's manual to ensure that her trailer and tow vehicle together do not exceed the tow vehicle's Gross Combination Weight Rating. This is essential for the safe handling of the vehicle/trailer combination and for minimizing wear on the tow vehicle's tires, brakes, suspension, and engine.

An engineer from the Office of Defects Investigation will contact [REDACTED] to gather further information about their vehicle and guide them through the weighing process.

I hope this information is helpful. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Ronald L. Medford, Senior Associate Administrator for Vehicle Safety, at (202) 366-1810.

Sincerely yours,


for Jeffrey W. Runge, M.D.

cc: Washington Office

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Original Signed By

Jacqueline Glassman
for Jeffrey W. Runge, M.D.

cc: Washington Office

NHTSA: NVS-210: Congressional Response

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cc:

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Subject/Chron/Optical Disk/CRD

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